

Bonner House

Inspection report for residential family centre

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Inspector	Mary Timms
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Date of last inspection	05/05/2011

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This centre is registered to provide placements for 8 families. The service is provided by a non-profit making charitable organisation. The range of facilities have been developed to support one family unit which includes a parent or parents who may have a physical disability. In addition to residential assessment placements this service facilitates day assessments and community based assessments.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The centre is highly effective and is well-managed. Residential placements inform high quality assessments which are analytical and evidence based. Assessment reports and associated care practice are found to be comprehensive and of an excellent quality. Assessment reporting is valued by involved professionals who confirm an overall positive view of the service provided.

A particular strength of the service is the overall staffing provision. Families are supported by a highly experienced and well trained staff team, who provide an outstanding level of support and guidance and understand the individual vulnerabilities and needs of each family unit. Staff understand safe working practice and take action promptly when necessary to ensure children's needs are met in full. The majority of comments from parents demonstrate good relationships between parents and staff, confirming that this has strengthened their ability to develop new parenting skills and knowledge.

Parents are involved in all stages of the assessment from planning the placement through to final reporting. Their views are seen as important and are reflected across a range of records. Families feel safe and are kept safe by broad ranging monitoring and safeguarding oversight. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and also the weaknesses of the service and are committed to service development. Actions are taken promptly to tackle weaknesses where noted.

As a result of this inspection three recommendations have been made to further improve practice within the centre. These relate to strengthening a policy, to ensure that the cover is always used when a rotary washing line is not in use. Additionally, for the Registered Manager to ensure that incidents which involve staff stepping in to assist in the management of children's behaviour are more closely reviewed in order to identify learning points.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the manager reviews incidents of challenging behaviour and examines emerging issues. The manager should enable staff to reflect and learn from incidents and ensure any review informs future practice (NMS 4.5)
- ensure that there are clear procedures which promote parents and children's safety and welfare. In particular this relates to the need to clarify with written procedures the required reporting process to be followed for safeguarding concerns about parents who are themselves deemed as vulnerable adults which is in-line with local authority led inter-agency reporting procedures (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. In particular this relates to the need to implement risk management strategies which ensure the safety of young children in relation to the shared rotary washing line when folded. (NMS 11.2)

Quality of assessment

The quality of assessment is **outstanding**.

Extremely comprehensive and individualised assessment formats are developed which are effectively implemented into practice. This is because the service obtains substantial current and historical detail to ensure that assessments are well-informed in relation to both parents and children. Additionally pre-placement planning meetings are held, which include involved professionals and family members. Comments from parents include 'the planning meeting gave us a better idea what the assessment would be like'. This means that parents understand what to expect during their placement.

Assessments are undertaken in a manner which is consistent with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. Additional focus points for the assessment set by the courts or placing authorities are made clear within planning arrangements and are reflected in assessment reporting. This means that key risk factors are clearly identified and well-detailed risk management strategies are developed from the onset of each family placement. The progress families make is evidenced to a very high standard. Observations of parenting capacity are recorded

in detail throughout each day of the assessment. Observations and monitoring of children's care are typically agreed to be very intense during the initially stages of assessment and will reduce when appropriate. Regular review meetings are held during which agreement for the next phase of the assessment is reached by family members and involved professionals. This means that families understand what is expected at each stage of their assessment.

Parents speak positively about their inclusion in placement planning and confirm that they understood the structure and scope of the assessment at an early stage of their placement. Parents are positive about the amount and quality of the feedback that they receive and confirm that this has assisted them to improve specific areas of parenting. Parents are involved at every stage of their assessment and confirm that they feel listened to. Comments include 'when we had our review meeting we were shown the report by our case manager and were asked if we needed help to understand'. Also, 'we always feel able to talk and feel listened to in our meetings and when we meet our case manager'. This shows that parents views are seen as important and are included within the assessment process.

Final assessment reports are analytical and are evidence based. Conclusions and recommendations reflect risk factors and provide a clear picture of how parenting ability has developed during the assessment period. Reporting also clarifies potential for change and parental capacity to meet their child's future needs and to promote their welfare. As a result placing social work team and court professionals are able to make informed decisions about each child's future.

The use of surveillance systems to inform the assessment is made clear to both placing teams and parents prior to the commencement of the assessment. Families describe how as the assessment progresses observations are reduced, and for some surveillance systems are no longer deemed as required. This demonstrates that this intrusion into privacy is used only to support the assessment process for as long as necessary, at a time when such observations are agreed as vital for the assessment and/or to ensure children's wellbeing.

The scope of assessment reporting is broad and intrinsically reflect research based knowledge. The qualified and experienced staff who lead and undertake family assessments have an excellent understanding of child development and attachment theory. Where required assessment reporting is supported by the direct contribution of mental health professionals working directly for this organisation. The Parenting Assessment Manual (PAMS) is well used within the service for parents with a diagnosed learning disability, deemed as particularly vulnerable or to extra learning needs.

Assessment outcomes are supported by close working with external agencies. For example the service has close links with the health visitor and midwifery service provided from a local health centre. As a result judgements about parenting capacity and risk to children are well informed by professionals who have a broad understanding of the nature and scope of this service.

Feedback about the quality of assessments from involved professionals is extremely positive. Comments from placing social workers include 'I am impressed by the quality of the service, assessment reporting was good and made clear the potential for change'. Comments from court professionals include, 'I am always impressed by and confident in the ability of staff to stand up in court and represent the outcomes of an assessment'. Feedback demonstrates that involved professionals are confident in the service provided to families and also in the quality of assessment.

Quality of care, support and guidance

The quality of the care, support and guidance is **outstanding**.

The needs of children and families are always central within the delivery of this high quality service. Comprehensive programmes of individualised support and guidance are facilitated to an extremely high standard. Parents have a positive view of the service and are able to reflect positively on the impact this has had on their parenting. Parents confirm broadly that they have benefited from work completed with them, either as individuals or in group sessions. Families describe work as including child development, practical guidance about feeding their baby, the importance of routine, risks factors and managing vulnerable situations. Comments from parents include, 'we learnt a lot from the sessions, these help your parenting'. This demonstrates that families have an opportunity to benefit from wide-ranging programmes of support and guidance.

Parents and children are provided with key information about the centre and the assessment process prior to moving in. The service welcomes families for visits prior to the commencement of their assessment and these are encouraged. Families say that they were made to feel welcome from the very start of their assessment. Comments from parents include 'The staff are all lovely, they are here to help, they are not against you'. 'I think this service is a good opportunity for families to show what they can do.' Also 'we are very happy with assessment/placement. Staff have been really good, non-judgemental, respectful and friendly'. These comments demonstrate that families feel supported during what is a challenging time for them.

The staff work proactively to identify and support individual welfare needs including those relating to personal preferences, religion, culture, language or disabilities. Examples of specific support provided recently include: purchasing a new mattress in response to a request; ensuring interpreters are provided to reduce language barriers; supporting parents to attend a place of worship; ensuring children attend school in line with usual routine and unquestioning recognition that parents have specific learning styles or needs. Parents who are themselves teenagers are supported in line with their age and personal development. For example, staff support young parents to develop their independence skills, including budgeting and cooking alongside the care of the child. Parents who are themselves looked after children are supported in a manner consistent with their own care plan. This shows that the additional needs of young and vulnerable parents are seen as important and extra support is provided to equip them to effectively care for themselves and their children.

The centre provides each family with secure, well-equipped and self-contained accommodation based around a central garden, where a selection of appropriate outdoor play equipment is provided for families to share. The environment is decorated and maintained to a high standard. Parents are able to make suggestions which are valued and acted upon in relation to the facilities. A recent example is the fitting of blinds in response to requests from families. The centre is appropriately located within easy reach of community resources and a local health centre. The service additionally provides facilities for meetings, for group work, a play room, a laundry room and one flat which has been structured to support a parent with a physical disability. The high quality facilities and accommodation provided mean that families are confident in their living environment during their residential assessment.

Managers and staff are very aware of the impact of a directed residential assessment on families and remain mindful of the impact of the associated constraints. This level of sensitivity means that parents feel respected. Staff are highly experienced, skilled and use both tried and tested but also creative ways of supporting families as individuals. For example, staff will guide parents verbally, they may provide written guidance using simple language or will adopt the use of wall charts where this is found to benefit parents.

Parents receive an excellent level and quality of feedback on the progress they make throughout the assessment. Parents say that they receive feedback each day and then also during frequent meetings with their case manager. They receive a copy of each assessment review report, which they are supported to understand where necessary. Parents' good progress is praised where they are demonstrating new or improved skills and they are also given guidance in relation to areas identified as needing improvement. This shows that parents are provided with opportunities to understand their progress and where necessary to further develop their parenting through reflection and discussion.

While parents retain parental responsibility for their children staff closely monitor their care to ensure that children's needs are always fully met. Medication is initially stored and administered centrally until such time as assessment review identifies that parents should take this area of responsibility on in full. As a result needs relating to medication are met to a high standard. Where parents are found to be unwilling or unable to respond to children's immediate needs highly experienced and skilled staff step in quickly, either to empower and guide parents or when required to take over with a particular task or care need. As a result children's needs are consistently met to a high standard.

Staff build productive partnerships with external agencies and involved professionals. Feedback confirms that the service is held in high regard and that communication and liaison is highly effective. Comments from professionals include 'the staff have an in-depth knowledge of local support services'. Also, 'The service is brilliant', 'they involve everyone right from the onset, everyone is invited to meetings and there is always a clear plan of work'.

Safeguarding children and parents

The service is **good** at keeping children and parents safe and feeling safe.

The welfare of children and families is paramount within service arrangements and there are effective systems in place which promote the protection of both adults and children. Parents report that they feel safe and also that the way the service operates helps them to keep their children safe.

Families are protected by the implementation of safe staff recruitment practices. Visitors to the centre are vetted and those visiting families are limited and only granted access when approved by placing teams. As a result families are protected from unsuitable persons gaining access to the centre.

Environmental health and safety is seen as important and broad ranging risk assessments and monitoring checks are operated. Family accommodation is well-structured to provide security as visitors have to pass through a central entrance. Fire safety is prioritised and families are very clear about the actions they should take should a real fire occur. The recent purchasing of new blinds was informed by an assessment of risk to children. However, an observation was made during the inspection of a closed rotary washing line adjacent to the play area which was unprotected by a cover. While this was acted on immediately and staff report this is usually covered, this raises the potential for harm to children and a recommendation has been made in this regard.

Assessment plans include detailed oversight of known and potential risk factors and set out clear risk management strategies. As a result staff understand the diverse vulnerabilities of parents and children and work effectively to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are prioritised. Assessment planning prioritises the overall welfare and protection of children and dictates the level of support, monitoring and observations required to ensure each child's safety. Well trained and experienced staff are very clear about their role in the protection of children and while having high aspirations for parents to succeed act promptly when a safeguarding concern arises.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the residential family centre are **good**.

The service is led by an appropriately experienced and qualified Registered Manager who has been in post since July 2012. Staff are confident in leaders and managers from across the organisation and feel supported by the Registered Manager in their day-to-day work. Comments from recent staff survey forms include 'I feel that I am supported by my line manager and other managers in the centre'. Also, 'guidance and directions from management is very good, I find if I have concerns that they are approachable'.

Actions have been taken in response to requirements and recommendations set on

the last full inspection of the centre in May 2011 and during an additional visit to the centre in July 2012. Safeguarding procedures now set out clearly the name of the designate safeguarding officer within the organisation. A file containing local authority procedures in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults has been introduced since the last inspection, which ensures that staff have access to locally agreed protocols. However, the centre's own policy does not currently make reference to the need to report in line with agreed inter-agency procedures and a further recommendation has been made in this regard. The Registered Manager has taken action to ensure the submission to HMCI of required notifications. Additionally there is now broad evidence to demonstrate that families are highly involved in and contribute to the assessment process.

Staff have a clear comprehension of their role and responsibilities within the delivery of high quality assessments and the meeting of individual needs during residential placements. The aims and objectives of the service are clearly set out in the centre's Statement of Purpose. Additionally a resident's guide is produced which provides key information in an easy to read format. As a result commissioners and parents understand the structure and objectives of assessments and the care and support to be provided.

Assessments are led by qualified social workers and are supported by well-trained and experienced family support workers. New staff undertake an induction which reflects the modules set by the Children's Workforce Development Council before moving on to complete a relevant level 3 diploma. Training is seen as important within the organisation and a programme of training and staff development is led by a dedicated manager. A programme of mandatory training is delivered, which is refreshed at appropriate intervals. This means that residential support and assessment is facilitated by competent and knowledgeable staff.

Leaders and managers are forward thinking and demonstrate a commitment to service development and have plans in place to promote continuous improvement. An example of development since the last inspection of this centre is the introduction of a ten day 'place of safety viability assessment' which is offered to avoid a potential premature separation of parent and child. This was introduced to meet the needs of families and commissioners and has informed future plans for a number of children over the last twelve months.

Quality assurance is prioritised and addressed in a number of ways. Survey forms are issued to families, involved professionals and staff throughout the year. Additionally the manager meets with families during some of the weekly residents meetings. Feedback is used to inform service development. For example, a larger buggy shelter and an additional washing machine were recently introduced to the service in response to comments from families. The service is visited on a monthly basis by an external manager who reports on the quality of care provided. Additionally the Registered Manager monitors service provision and where necessary takes action to tackle weaknesses. However, incidents which have involved the necessity for staff to step in and assist a parent with a child's challenging behaviour are not as a matter of routine reviewed by the manager or other senior staff. As a result learning points are

not always identified promptly.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of residential family centres.